

Feb 22, 2022

Dear Co-Chairs of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, my name is Emily Ross Feltes. I am testifying for SB #19. I am a military spouse of a Captain in the Air Force. We lived here when he commissioned and I had a CT real estate license. When we moved from CT to TX I decided to let my license lapse and did not get my TX license due to licensing difficulties and knowing we'd only be there a year. We moved to ND where I looked into teaching licensure but ultimately decided against it because I didn't know what state we'd go to next. Quite a gamble! Three years later he got orders to California. Since my husband is getting out of the service soon, our family decided it was best for my children and me to move to CT early and settle in for life post-military. I have been very shocked and frustrated with how difficult it is to gain licensure in the state. Even if I went to CA and got my license, it wouldn't be eligible for reciprocity because of the 2-year rule. Most families are only in a location for 2-3 years. This means, if you get your license (can be a 2-year process) you would have 0-1 years of holding that license before moving.

I have looked into surrounding states and have found that VT has a wonderful program. You have to student teach for 13 weeks, and create a portfolio explaining everything you have learned, proving that you are competent in all standards of teaching. They require the praxis as well. I would like for CT to look into such a program for anyone holding a bachelor's degree.

I have a bachelor's in Painting and Ceramics and have been a long-term sub for the whole 2021-2022 school year. My first position was 5 months as a high school ceramics teacher and my current job is an art teacher for PreK- 4th. I have learned so much and feel confident in my abilities in the classroom but the state will not recognize ANY of my experience. I am expected to go to a 2-year post-baccalaureate program, pay \$25k+, and go to in-person classes over an hour from my home for those 2 years. That is impossible. All for a subject I am professionally trained in. Another cost is that I will not be able to claim benefits or retirement for those 2 years.

I have already taken an extra college course since US History is required for all CT teachers. I will have to take one more in science as well, which is obviously totally unrelated. I appreciate that we want well-rounded educators but when it comes to specials (Art, music, physical Ed, technology) I feel it is just another hurdle that is pushing people out of the profession.

This is alarming for the state. We are planning to move to VT if CT remains so unnecessarily challenging regarding licensure requirements. Our kids need educators now. Art isn't a "shortage" area despite 38 vacant jobs on CTREAP. Art isn't offered through ARC so I am left with one option, an option that isn't doable for myself and my family. I am a great teacher. My students have given me lovely feedback and testimonials. One high schooler decided to write an article about me in the student newspaper! Quite touching. Yet, the state is making it so difficult, I may be yet another qualified educator who is pushed out of the state. Thank you for your time and understanding.